

Thomas P. Ives House
66 Power Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-235

~~An addendum to~~
Ives House
66 Power Street
Providence, Rhode Island
in HABS Catalog (1941)

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
12-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

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Address: 66 Power Street, Providence, Providence County,
Rhode Island.

Present Owner: Brown University.

Present Occupant: Mrs. Robert H. Ives Goddard.

Present Use: Residence.

Brief Statement
of Significance: Built in 1803-1805, this is one of the largest and
most elegant houses of the period in Providence,
and the home of a prominent Providence family.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Original owner, Thomas Poynton Ives, died 1835; to his widow Hope Ives until her death in 1855; to her son Moses B. Ives until his death in 1857; to his widow Anne Allen Dorr Ives until her death in 1884; to her daughter Mrs. Hope Brown Ives Russell until her death in 1909; to her cousins Robert H. I. Goddard and William Ames; to Robert H. Ives Goddard, Jr., in 1910. Upon his death, the house was willed to Brown University with a life tenancy for his wife, the present occupant.

2. Date of erection: 1803-1805.

3. Architect, builder: According to an unverified tradition, Thomas P. Ives sent to England for plans for the house. According to the family papers preserved in the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, Caleb Ormsbee, a local architect and builder was in charge of the work. At this time, John Holden Greene, who became Providence's leading architect in the next two decades was apprenticed to Ormsbee.

4. Notes on alterations and additions: About 1848 and following--gas lighting, central heating, built-in kitchen range, and plumbing added. Before 1884 the upper story of the east bay was added; lower story original. In the 1870's--dining room and library

elaborately redecorated by Marcott of New York. 1884--vestibule service wing and terraces added, Stone and Carpenter, architects; photostat of drawing dated April 21, 1884 preserved in the house drawn by Edmund R. Willson who later became a partner of Stone and Carpenter. Since 1910--an overmantel has been added to the fireplace in the parlor (southeast Room), and French doors have been added in the library leading to the garden; Jackson, Robertson and Adams, architects. 1954--restoration of the dining room; John Hutchins Cady, architect. Since 1954--marble mantelpiece from Philadelphia added to the dining room.

5. Important old views: There is an extra-illustrated, typed copy of Mr. Cady's article in the house together with ten 8" x 10" photographs including views of the dining room before the 1954 restoration.

6. Sources of information: John Hutchins Cady, "The Thomas Poynton Ives House," published in Rhode Island History, Vol. 14, No. 1 of January, 1955.

John Hutchins Cady, the Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 77-78.

Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 327, 333, 350-355, 380, 382, 383.

Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., Rhode Island Architecture (Providence: Rhode Island Museum Press, 1939), p. 32, pl. 25.

B. Supplemental Material: The following is extracted from Cady, "The Thomas Poynton Ives House," published in Rhode Island History following Mr. Cady's restoration of the dining room:

Thomas Poynton Ives was born in Beverly, Massachusetts, in 1769. He entered the house of Brown and Benson in Providence as a clerk, in 1782, and ten years later married Nicholas Brown's daughter, Hope. He then became a partner in the firm, which later took the name of Brown and Ives.

Mr. Ives acquired a two-acre tract on Power Street to the east of the estate on which John Brown, brother of Nicholas, had erected a mansion in 1786. Both estates were a part of the original home lot of William Wickenden to whom it was allotted in 1640. According to tradition Thomas Ives sent to England for plans of a house, which came designated as "a Georgian manor house with paved court yard, stable and coach house." The street number at first was 37 Power and was changed to 66 when the highway was re-numbered in 1870. The estate is now bounded by Brown Street on the west and Charles Field Street on the north, these highways having been laid out after the house was erected.

The house stands on the southwest portion of the lot. North of it is a courtyard flanked on the north and east by a two-story L-shaped outbuilding, doubtless erected when the house was built and substantially unchanged since that time. The north wing was originally used for a stable, harness room and coach house, and the east wing for a laundry and servants' quarters. The brick fireplace and adjacent brick boiler in the laundry and the wide floor boards and small paned windows in the second story are so typically New England that a local planner would seem to have had a hand in the design. Farther north, on the Charles Field Street border, is the original cow barn. The easterly part of the lot is a landscaped area. A granite wall, topped by an iron fence, is built along the sidewalk on the westerly half of the lot on Power Street and along Brown Street, and a high brick wall curves from the southeast corner of the house to Power Street. The remainder of the estate is enclosed by a wall of brick and stone.

The house, as originally erected, was a square block, 55 feet wide and 57 feet deep, three stories high, with a flat hipped roof. The walls were built of imported brick, laid in Flemish bond (except American running bond on the rear) and rising from a marble underpinning. Three of the chimneys are in the outside walls, two on the west and one on the east; the fourth chimney, which has back-to-back fireplaces in the library and smoking room, as well as in the rooms above, is set back a few feet from the wall. The windows, symmetrically spaced, have marble caps and sills, the splayed caps having double keys except in the third story and on the rear where they are plain. The front entrance has side lights and an elliptical top light over which, in the second story, is a window of the Palladian type. The main cornice is decorated with modillions and is crowned by an eaves balustrade. The plain rectangular form of the house is relieved by a round bay on the east and a semi-circular entrance porch of the south, the latter in the Corinthian order surmounted by a classic balustrade. The side bay, now rising full height and crowned by an extension of the main cornice and balustrade, originally was only one story in height.

The plan is large and imposing in scale with a wide central hall extending through the house and divided into front and rear sections by a partition with a doorway behind the stairs. The stairway, starting with a straight run, spirals at the rear to the second story, and the spiral from the second to the third story is free-standing. All of the rooms have fireplaces. The wood finish throughout the house is simple and delicately moulded, reflecting a departure from the baroque trend of the late eighteenth century. The principal rooms have elaborate plaster cornices. . . .

Aside from the expenses for rum, the earliest surviving document with respect to the house is a proposal made by James B. Walcott dated February 13, 1804 to furnish certain building materials. This proposal included 24 window caps with double keys and 26 window caps without

keys. All of these are now accounted for except five unkeyed windows eliminated when the north wing was built. Walcott's proposal also included marble underpinning as follows: 350 running feet of stone 16 inches wide and 160 to 180 feet of stone eight inches wide, all intended for three sides of the house. The present underpinnings do not entirely accord with this schedule. They are composed of two courses of marble, the lower ten inches high above grade and the upper 16 inches high, with small window openings on the south and west, a total length of 136 feet exclusive of the front curved porch and the east curved bay. . . .

Thomas P. Ives wrote his agent, Amos T. Jenckes, in Italy November 26, 1804, asking him to purchase in Leghorn four marble chimney pieces and about 600 feet in length of marble slabs four inches thick and 14 inches wide. Of the chimney pieces one was to be "handsome and neatly ornamental for a drawing room" one "somewhat ornamental," and the others "plainly wrought." Shipments of the four chimney pieces and slabs were made from Leghorn in May, 1805. One of these, described in the invoice as of "statuary marble, made according to the models, 36 inches high and 42 inches in breadth" referring to size of fireplace opening is evidently the one now in the parlor. Mr. Jenckes wrote Mr. Ives from New York July 22, 1805, that he had, at his own initiative, shipped from Leghorn 22 plain chimney pieces and various other items noted, for Mr. Ives' use or for sale in New York, of which Mr. Ives selected four chimney pieces, four alabaster lamps and one alabaster oval lamp cord. The disposition of the marble slabs is unknown. Evidently they were not used on the main block as the walls had been erected prior to their arrival. . . . in 1954, the dining room was restored to an approximation of its original status.

In this latter project, executed by Frank N. Gustafson and Sons, building contractors, the removal of the mahogany finish and mantel, the tapestry-type wall hangings, and the wall laths and plaster revealed certain aspects of the original construction. The two interior partitions were built of brick, the north one of which was interlaced with studding in the form of half-timber work. The outside brick walls were lined with rough boards. Plaster was applied directly to the brick on the partitions and to laths nailed to the boarding on the outside walls. The original fireplace had been entirely reconstructed and no clue remained as to its original status. The wall hangings had been attached to cleats, nailed to the plaster, and had been lifted from time to time for the installation of gas pipes and electric cable between the cleats. In the reconstruction work the walls were recovered with plaster, laid on wire laths.

In planning the restoration the original wood details of the parlor wainscot and door and window trim were closely followed. The former fireplace, with its yellow marble facing and hearth, was retained and a wood mantel built around it in adaptation of the work of Samuel McIntire of Salem. This was surmounted by an overmantel with carved mouldings to frame a portrait. The original moulded plaster cornice and the original wood floor boards were preserved. The mahogany doors and window shutters were retained, but a section of louvres in each set of shutters was replaced by a panel. The doorways were crowned with caps, decorated in flat relief, originally over doors in the central hall. The Victorian electric wall brackets were replaced by fixtures furnished by Edward F. Caldwell of New York.

The wood finish was painted white, except for the mahogany finish of the doors, window stools and wainscot cap. The floors were given a natural finish and the plaster walls were painted a dark blue-gray. . . .

The outward aspect of the original house is practically unchanged after standing nearly a century and a half, and the additions are in architectural conformity. The same may be said of the interior finish with the single exception of the library where the rather extravagant Victorian style provides a sharp, but not inharmonious, contrast with the simpler motives of the other rooms. In many respects the Thomas Poynton Ives house is the finest example of the Early Republican period of architecture in Providence.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: "The plain wall surfaces and skillful disposition of the openings give the house a sophistication rare in Rhode Island in an era of often vulgar ostentation." Hitchcock, Rhode Island Architecture, p. 32.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Square main block, 55' x 57', five-bay facade facing south, three stories high, with a curved bay on the east side approximately semicircular in plan with a 10' radius; rear service wing at the west corner of the north side of the house added 1884.

2. Foundations: Regular ashlar granite, large blocks.

3. Wall construction: Brick, laid in Flemish bond.

4. Porches: Semicircular entrance porch, original or an early addition, similar to porches by Samuel McIntire of Salem, slender fluted Ionic columns, full entablature with modillion cornice and balustrade.

5. Chimneys: Four original brick chimneys; three in outside walls, one interior chimney

6. Openings:

a. Doors and doorways: Paneled door, side lights and elliptical top light with elaborate mullions, elaborate doorway with colonettes, pilasters and carved trim.

b. Windows and shutters: Double hung windows; six light sash, louvered shutters, marble sills and splayed marble lintels.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape: Low pitched hip roof.
- b. Cornice: Modillion cornice with balustrade.
- c. Dormers: Segmental roofed attic dormers.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Central hall plan, hall 10' wide, with small entrance vestibule, and small separated rear hallway 10' x 10' leading to porch along east side of later rear wing; parlor at the front right (southeast), 20' x 22'; library behind the parlor with circular bay at the east, 18' x 28'; smoking room behind the library at the right rear (northeast), 13' x 20'; dining room at the left front (southwest), 20' x 28'; pantry behind the dining room leading to kitchen at left rear of main block, 16' x 20'; servants' sitting room, 12' x 15'; service stairway and service rooms in the rear wing. Bedrooms on second and third floors in similar arrangement.

2. Stairways: Stairway at rear of central hall, open well to third floor, starts with a straight run and curves in U-shape to second floor, free-standing curved stairway to third floor. Open string, slender rectangular balusters, molded rail, carved step end ornaments.

3. Flooring: Wide board floors.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, wainscot in some rooms, later paneling in library.

5. Doors and doorways: Paneled mahogany doors; crossetted, double molded architraves on principal doorways.

6. Trim: Elaborate ceiling cornices, of plaster.

7. Hardware: Butt hinges, silver hardware in principal locations.

8. Lighting: Electric.

9. Heating: Central. Fireplaces in many rooms, see supplemental material above for notes on later mantels.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south, at the southwest corner of a very large lot in a residential section, garages to the north, gardens to the east.
2. Enclosures: Brick, stone, and iron fences.
3. Outbuildings: Stable and coach houses to the north, now used for garages.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
May 1962